



† Traffic Fatalities †

This is a letter which was put out through our email system by a Mr. Christopher Morris. His insights into this issue should be expanded upon, to insure that this message will be received by the widest audience possible.

The MCAAP Fire Department responded to a vehicle collision on Hwy 69 last week. When we arrived on scene a semi truck was on fire and there was one fatality. This is not the first fatality crash that we have responded to on that stretch of highway. I predict it will not be the last fatality we work there.

Most of us travel the stretch of highway from Choctaw Travel to the entrance of the base every day. In my opinion this has to be one of the most dangerous sections of highway in the state. I have thought some about what I can do to minimize my risk of being in a collision:

† **Leave for work 5 minutes earlier and slow down.** Almost every morning I am passed by multiple vehicles going too fast.

† **Don't tailgate.** Use the 2 second rule for following traffic. A little extra distance could allow you to avoid a collision.

† **Try to always travel in the right hand lane.** Never place your vehicle in the left hand lane with a semi on your right with oncoming traffic approaching. That essentially boxes you in and leaves you no place to go

† **Get off the cell phone.** At least use a hands free device.

† **Never take a head on collision.** If both vehicles are going 55 then that makes for a 110 mph crash. If possible you are better off taking the ditch.

† **Seat belts.** In my years as a paramedic I have pulled two fatalities out of their seat belt. One was a head on collision at 70 mph. The other was a passenger car that was t-boned by a semi. I have heard all the excuses and stories about how if a particular person had been wearing a seat belt he would be dead. In my experience that just isn't true. If you play the odds 99 times out of 100 you will be better off with the seat belt on.

† **I have never pulled a fatality out of a child safety seat. Put your kids in the right size car seat. Take the time to read the instructions.**

† Buy vehicles with a **good government crash test rating.**

† **Don't drink and drive**. You could ruin a life and your life as well.

† **Watch out for the dog leg right before you get to the Indian Nation overpass.** Try not to be next to another vehicle, especially a semi, when going over this part of the trip. **I have seen trailers bounce all over the place when they hit all the pot holes in that area.** If the semi driver isn't really paying attention he could be on top of you before you know what happened.

† **Avoid packs of cars.** Again, don't get boxed in.

One of the things that goes through my mind at a fatality wreck is how a family somewhere is going to get some really bad news. Getting to work ahead of someone else is not worth risking your life for. Getting home 5 minutes quicker isn't worth a wreck either. If we all traveled 55 mph on this stretch of highway and stayed in the right hand lane I believe it would minimize our risk of being in an accident. I know I have driven too fast or been aggressive at times. But, our families need us and this would be a good time for all of us to think about being a little safer when we drive.